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ABSTRACT

Literature written for children is often an unselfconscious distillation of a national consensus or a national debate. The characterizations of African Americans in U.S. children's literature show how the white supremacy myth infected the mainstream collective consciousness and the degree to which features of the slavery era were retained. The antislavery cause vanished in the era of peace following the Civil War, and legal emancipation was neutralized in public consciousness by racist stories that portrayed black identity as of less value than white identity. This study selects a book sample that reveals the specific ideas about blacks that were circulating widely. The following chapters are included: (1) "Ambivalent Abolitionism"; (2) "Sociopolitical and Artistic Dimensions of Abolitionist Tales"; (3) "Personal and Institutional Dimensions"; (4) "Children's Fiction" (first chapter in the section on postbellum years); (5) "The Social/Political Context"; (6) "Literary Lives"; (7) "Postwar Institutions"; (8) "Literary Methods and Conventions"; and (9) "Conclusion." Fifty-four sources are listed for children's readings, and 191 sources are listed for additional reading. (SLD)

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